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PATENT APPLICATION

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

In re Application of: )  
Mitsuji MARUMO )  
Application No.: 09/450,680 )  
Filed: November 30, 1999 )  
For: MINI-ENVIRONMENT POD DEVICE, AN ) March 22, 2002  
EXPOSURE APPARATUS AND A )  
DEVICE MANUFACTURING METHOD )  
USING THE SAME )

Examiner: S. Rao

Group Art Unit: 2814

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Commissioner for Patents  
Washington, D.C. 20231

RESPONSE TO RESTRICTION REQUIREMENT AND AMENDMENT  
WITH PETITION FOR EXTENSION OF TIME

Sir:

Petition for Extension of Time

Applicant petitions the Commissioner for Patents to extend the time for response to the Office Action dated October 4, 2001, for three months from January 4, 2002, to April 4, 2002. A check in the amount of \$920.00 for payment of the extension fee is enclosed. Please charge any additional fee required for the extension, or credit any overpayment, to Deposit Account 06-1205.

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### Response To Restriction Requirement

Applicant respectfully traverses the restriction requirement set forth in the Office Action dated October 4, 2001.

In the Office Action, the Examiner sets forth a restriction requirement between two groups of claims. Group I, claims 1-18, is directed to an apparatus for processing cassettes, classified in class 355, subclass 73. Group II, claims 19 and 20, is directed to a semiconductor manufacturing method, classified in class 438, subclass 108.

The Examiner contends that the inventions of Groups I and II are patentably distinct because they are related as process and apparatus for its practice, and have acquired a separate status in the art due to their different classification such that the searches are not coextensive, requiring separate examination. These contentions are respectfully traversed.

Applicant notes that the inventions of Groups I and II are so closely related in the field of processing cassettes utilizing a mini-environment pod device that a proper search of any of the claims would, of necessity, require a search of the others. Thus, it is submitted that all of the claims can be searched simultaneously, and that a duplicative search, with possibly inconsistent results, may occur if the restriction requirement is maintained.

Applicant further submits that any nominal burden placed upon the Examiner to search an additional subclass or two, necessary to determine the art relevant to Applicant's overall invention is significantly outweighed by the public interest in not having to obtain and study several separate patents in order to have available all of the issued patent claims covering Applicant's invention. The alternative is to proceed with the filing of multiple

applications, each consisting of generally the same disclosure, and each being subjected to essentially the same search, perhaps by different Examiners on different occasions. This places an unnecessary burden on both the Patent and Trademark Office and on Applicant.

In the interest of economy, for the Office, for the public-at-large and for Applicant, reconsideration and withdrawal of the restriction requirement are requested.

Nevertheless, in order to comply with the requirements of 37 CFR 1.143, Applicant confirms the provisional election, with traverse, to prosecute the invention of Group I, namely claims 1-18.

#### Amendment

In response to the Official Action dated October 4, 2001, please amend the above-identified application as follows:

#### IN THE SPECIFICATION

Please replace the paragraph starting at page 1, line 9, and ending on page 2, line 3, with the following paragraph. A marked-up copy of the paragraph showing the changes made thereto is attached in Appendix A.

a -- FIG. 10 shows a structure of a conventional exposure apparatus 101 as a micro-device manufacturing apparatus. In this apparatus, a handling robot 1 draws a wafer 4 (e.g., a semiconductor substrate, a glass substrate, etc.) from a cassette 2, which stores a plurality of wafers, and carries the wafer 4 into a mechanical pre-alignment station 39. In